Okanagan Region

# MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT

**March, 2003**

for **Vaseux**
Protected Area

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
Environmental Stewardship Division

105-05484/

# Vaseux
# Protected Area

## Forward and Approvals Page

### Forward

Vaseux Protected Area was primarily set aside to protect low to mid-elevation grasslands which provide important winter range for California bighorn sheep, and to provide habitat connectivity to wildlife management areas that abut the protected area immediately adjacent to the two sites and to other protected areas on the west side of the Okanagan Valley.

### Approvals

Drew Carmichael
Regional Manager
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: March 7, 2003

Nancy Wilkin
Assistant Deputy Minister
Environmental Stewardship Division

Date: Mar. 31/03

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# Introduction

## Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

A management direction statement (MDS) provides strategic management direction for a protected area. A MDS also describes protected area values, management issues and concerns, a management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies, and direction statements from other planning processes. While strategies may be identified in the MDS, the development and implementation of all these strategies is subject to funding. In addition, all development associated with these strategies within the protected area is subject to the BC Parks' Impact Assessment Policy.

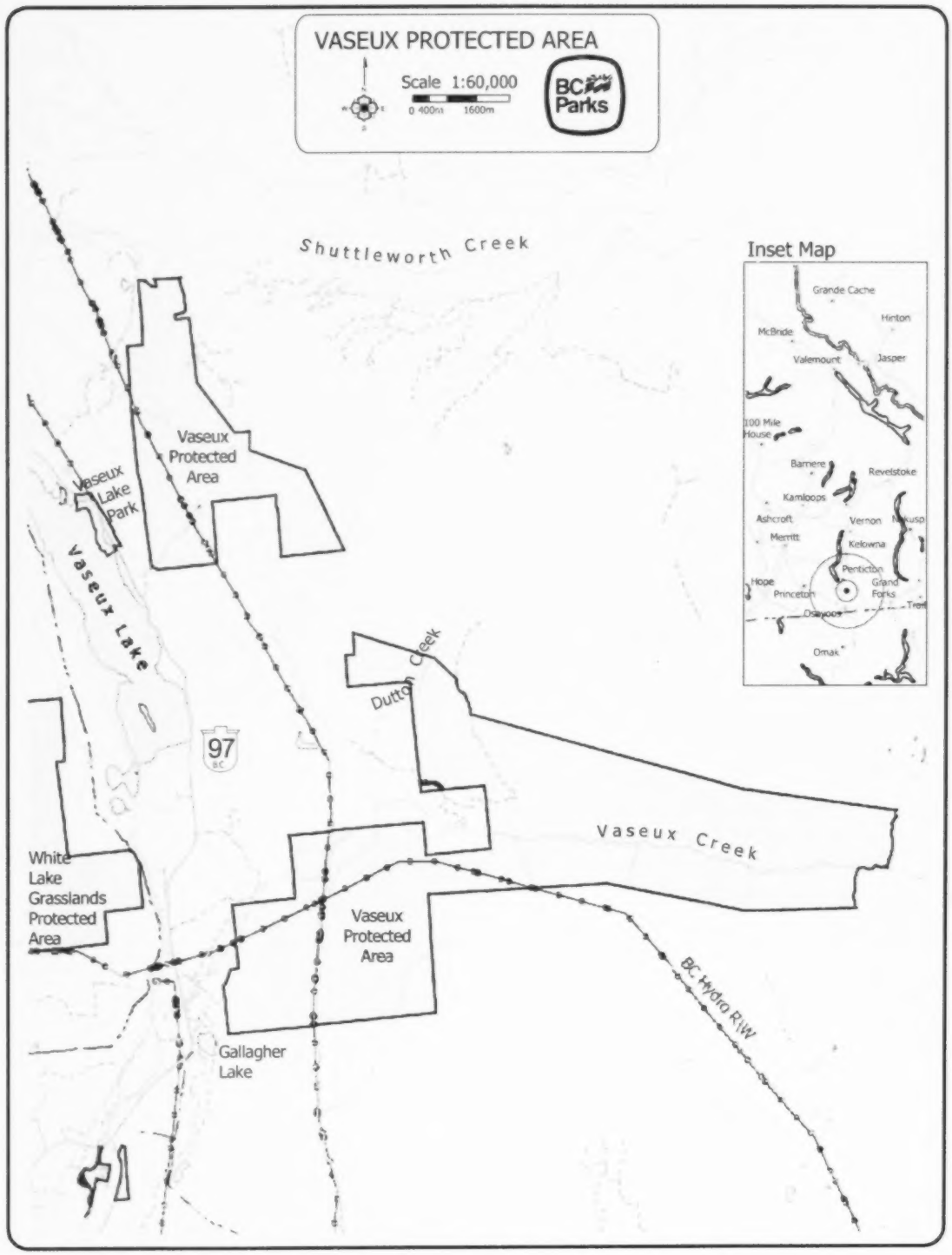
This MDS was developed through direction received from the Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan (OSLRMP), as well as comments from government staff, stakeholders and interest groups.

## Setting and Context

The provincial Protected Areas Strategy provided the framework for identifying areas that would contribute towards ecological representation within the province. As part of that strategy, the provincial government undertook several strategic level regional planning initiatives (higher-level plans) throughout the province. The Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan is the higher-level plan that pertains to the Vaseux Protected Area. The OSLRMP recommended that a number of protected areas be established to protect natural, cultural heritage and/or recreational values. The LRMP Table used the Protected Areas Strategy as a guide in the selection of protected areas and in providing directions for their management.

Vaseux was recommended as a protected area by the Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan in 2000. The area was established as a protected area by Order in Council under the *Environment and Land Use Act* on April 18, 2001. The *Park Act* and associated regulations apply as if the protected area is a Class A provincial park. The intent is to transfer the protected area to Schedule D of the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act* to establish it as a Class A park. The protected area is located approximately 20 km north of Oliver in the south Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. The Vaseux Protected Area covers an area of approximately 2,015 hectares.

The area was primarily set aside for the protection of low to mid-elevation grasslands which provide important winter range for California bighorn sheep, and to provide habitat connectivity to wildlife management areas that abut the protected area to the north, between the two sites, to the south, and to other protected areas on the west side of the Okanagan Valley.


VASEUX PROTECTED AREA
Scale 1:60,000
0 400m 1600m
BC Parks
Shuttleworth Creek
Inset Map
Grande Cache
Hinton
McBride
Valemount
Jasper
100 Mile House
Barriere
Revelstoke
Kamloops
Ashcroft
Vernon
Merritt
Kelowna
Penticton
Hope
Princeton
Grand Forks
Osoyoos
Omak
Vaseux Protected Area
Vaseux Lake Park
Vaseux Lake
Dutton Creek
97
Vaseux Creek
White Lake Grasslands Protected Area
Vaseux Protected Area
BC Hydro R/W
Gallagher Lake

## Protected Area Attributes

### Conservation

- Situated in the poorly represented Northern Okanagan Highland Ecosection and the well represented Southern Okanagan Basin Ecosection
- Vaseux contains portions of four biogeoclimatic zones: Bunchgrass – very dry/hot (BGxh1), Interior Douglas-fir – dry/mild (IDFdm1), Interior Douglas-fir – very dry/hot (IDFxh1), and Ponderosa Pine – very dry/hot (PPxh1)

| BEC Variant | Area of BEC variant in province (ha) | Hectares of BEC variant within existing protected areas | % of BEC variant within existing protected areas | Hectares of BEC variant protected in Vaseux Protected Area | % of BEC variant in protected areas system in Vaseux Protected Area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BGxh1 | 49,743 | 2,443 | 4.9% | 124 | 5.1% |
| IDFdm1 | 173,417 | 4,645 | 2.7% | 12 | 0.3% |
| IDFxh1 | 241,635 | 16,554 | 6.9% | 474 | 2.9% |
| PPxh1 | 92,191 | 9,504 | 10.3% | 1,385 | 14.6% |

- Protects important elevation gradient from Bunchgrass on lower slopes to Interior Douglas-fir on upper slopes
- Contains some rare old growth larch stands
- Steep slopes with open forests and small grassland areas occur on south-facing slopes, dense forests on north facing slopes
- Important California bighorn sheep (provincial blue-listed species) habitat
- Provides habitat for golden eagles, canyon wrens, western bluebirds, gray flycatchers, flammulated owls, Nutall's cottontails, spotted bats, pallid bats, night snakes, and white throated swifts
- Important white-headed woodpecker (provincial red-listed species; COSEWIC ranking: endangered) and Williamson's sapsucker habitat in old growth larch stands
- Protects spectacular McIntyre Canyon and Vaseux Creek
- Provides a contiguous link with other parcels of land (e.g. Canadian Wildlife Service lands; Nature Trust of BC lands) that are protected for conservation values
- Links Canadian Wildlife Service lands to other important California bighorn sheep habitat
- Best remaining *Purshia tridentate* in the South Okanagan is on adjacent private land
- Contains known records of 1 red- and 7 blue-listed species (see Appendix II for a complete list of the Conservation Data Centre red- and blue-listed species)

### Recreation / Tourism

- The recreational/tourism opportunities of Vaseux Protected Area are associated with wildlife viewing, hiking, photography and hunting opportunities

### Cultural Heritage

- There are four known archaeological sites within the protected area

### Education and Research Role

- Vaseux Protected Area could provide an excellent educational and interpretive example of the importance of connectivity for species and ecosystems in a human/wildlife interface landscape, and the importance of protected areas for helping to maintain biodiversity in the South Okanagan
- The Canadian Wildlife Service and the Ministry of Water Land and Air Protection – Environmental Stewardship Division have been studying the California bighorn sheep in the area

### Significance in the Protected Area System

- Lies within the North Okanagan Highland and Southern Okanagan Basin ecosections. The North Okanagan Highland Ecosection is poorly represented within the provincial protected areas system. Only 4.04% of this ecosection is dedicated to protected area status, but Vaseux Protected Area only contributes 1.59% of this overall representation. 12.35% of the Southern Okanagan Basin Ecosection is dedicated to protected area status. Vaseux Protected Area contributes 15.07% of the overall protected area representation of this ecosection, making it the third largest contributor behind South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area and White Lake Grasslands Protected Area.
- Important contribution (14.6%) to the 10.3% of PPxh1 protected in the province.
- Protects critically important winter range for California bighorn sheep
- Protects habitat for 8 red- and blue-listed species including white-headed woodpecker and Williamson's sapsucker
- Provides low intensity wildlife viewing opportunities

## Other Land Uses and Interests

### Access

- Vaseux – Site 1 is accessible from a gravel road, and Site 2 from the Okanagan Falls Forest Service Road
- There are numerous wildlife and cattle trails throughout the protected area. There are no officially maintained trails within the protected area.

### Existing Tenures, Alienations and Encumbrances

All existing liens, charges, and encumbrances other than those applying to commercial logging, mining or energy exploration and development, will continue to be authorized through issuance of park use permits (PUPs). This policy recognizes all existing *Land Act* tenures, special use permits (SUPs), water rights, trapping licenses and other legal tenures and rights.

Existing tenures within the protected area:

- 10 irrigation tenures
- 1 water storage tenure
- 1 water storage/irrigation tenure

- 1 domestic water/irrigation tenure
- 2 trap line tenures
- 1 guide/outfitter
- 3 utility corridor right-of-ways (BC Hydro has 2 tenures, Aquila Networks Canada has one tenure) bisect the protected area
- Portions of two grazing tenures fall within the protected area. One tenure is owned by Nature Trust and is managed for wildlife values.
- Park Use Permit for helicopter flight training

## Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- Forest harvesting activities occur on the lands in the vicinity and adjacent to the protected area
- Extensive cattle grazing occur on lands bounding the protected area
- Canadian Wildlife Service and Nature Trust manage adjoining lands for conservation values and protection of important California bighorn sheep habitat
- Guide/Outfitter has important hunting territory just north of the protected area
- Other protected areas in the vicinity of Vaseux Protected Area include Vaseux Lake and Inkaneep provincial parks, South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area, a bird sanctuary on Vaseux Lake, and the Canadian Wildlife Service and Nature Trust lands
- Nature Trust is actively trying to acquire more land in the South Okanagan for the purposes of conservation

## Aboriginal Interests

- Interests of the Okanagan First Nation are unknown

## Other Agency Interests

- Canadian Wildlife Service and Nature Trust for management of adjoining lands and California bighorn sheep issues
- BC Hydro and Aquila Networks Canada for utility right-of-way corridors
- Ministry of Forests for maintenance of Forest Service roads, management of grazing and assistance in the management of forest heath issues
- Ministry of Forests, Protection Branch manages wildfire responses

## Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

Private Interests:

- Management of grazing licenses that overlap protected area
- Management of forest health issues

Public interests:

- Nature viewing
- Hiking opportunities
- Nature conservation and ecosystem management (non-government groups and organizations)
- Fire management for ecosystem health and protection of adjacent private properties

## Role of Vaseux Protected Area

The primary roles of Vaseux Protected Area are to protect low to mid-elevation grasslands that provide important winter range for California bighorn sheep and to protect its rare species and habitats. The protected area also provides habitat connectivity to wildlife management areas that abut the protected area. A secondary role is to continue providing low intensity recreational opportunities, such as wildlife viewing, hiking and nature appreciation.

## Management Commitments and Issues

### Management Direction From Previous and Ongoing Planning

The Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) recommended establishment of the protected area with logging, mining and energy exploration and development prohibited. The LRMP provided statements of management direction that have been incorporated into the management direction statement.

### Management Issues

The following table lists specific issues, by theme, requiring management action:

| Theme | Issue |
|---|---|
| Protecting Natural Values | • Protection of rare species habitat from recreation, grazing and other activities<br>• Impact of vegetation encroachment on grassland communities and associated reduction in grazing habitat for California bighorn sheep and other ungulates<br>• Need to determine if there is any impact on wildlife from helicopter flight training and, if required, what mitigation measures should be implemented<br>• Work with the Canadian Wildlife Service and Nature Trust to develop similar conservation management objectives on adjoining lands<br>• Need to develop a vegetation management strategy to deal with forest fire, disease and health issues<br>• Impact of cattle grazing activities on winter forage for sheep<br>• Potential for domestic animals to pass disease to wild sheep<br>• Need to develop strategies to minimize human/wildlife conflicts<br>• Determine strategies to ensure ecological integrity of the protected area is maintained<br>• Impact of recreational activities on California bighorn sheep habitat |
| Protecting Recreational Values | • Determination of permissible activities |
| Protecting Cultural Values | • How will the cultural values of the protected area be protected |
| Public Safety | • Need to identify and mitigate public safety hazards<br>• Lack of public safety information |
| Visitor Information / Interpretation | • Need to provide accurate and up-to-date visitor information concerning recreational opportunities and educational material for the protected area<br>• How to relay to the public the importance of Vaseux Protected Area for the protection of California bighorn sheep habitat |

| | |
|---|---|
| First Nations Values | • Unknown First Nations information on the area<br>• Need for enhanced communication with First Nations concerning their interests in the protected area |

# Management Direction

## Management Objectives and Strategies

The following table lists specific strategies, by theme, to achieve management objectives:

| Objective | Strategy |
|---|---|
| Protect natural values | • Develop range management strategies in consultation with Ministry of Forests and range tenure licensees to ensure the continuation of good winter range habitat for California bighorn sheep and protection of rare species habitat<br>• Undertake inventories of the natural values (flora and fauna), focusing on species at risk (e.g. white-headed woodpecker, Williamson's sapsucker)<br>• Work with the Ministry of Forests and forest companies to minimize the potential of wind throw in the protected area resulting from forest harvesting activities on adjacent land<br>• Encourage compliance with provincial hunting regulations<br>• Maintain sustainable wildlife harvest levels for trappers, hunters and guide/outfitter<br>• Develop and monitor disease control program<br>• Develop a vegetation management strategy to specifically deal with issues of forest health (forest fire, disease)<br>• Develop management strategy for the retention of old growth larch stands |
| Manage Recreational Values | • Work with the Ministry of Forests to maintain and control appropriate road access to the protected area; close/gate non-status roads not required<br>• Provide low-intensity day use recreation opportunities such as hiking, nature study and hunting<br>• Minimize impacts of recreational activities on the protected area by limiting the provision of recreation infrastructure and services (no formalize trails, visitor facilities) other than those necessary to provide basic visitor information<br>• Undertake an assessment of public safety hazards and take appropriate mitigation measures to minimize, reduce or eliminate identified hazards<br>• Provide adequate signage and public information on the natural hazards of the area and ways to minimize public safety incidents (bear awareness) |
| Protect Cultural Values | • Develop a management strategy for the cultural values |
| Provision of Visitor Information and Services | • Provide information to visitors on the importance of the area for the California bighorn sheep and species at risk |
| First Nations | • Work with the appropriate First Nations to determine their traditional use and interest in the protected area |

## Integration with Other Land Use Planning Processes

- The protected area will be managed in accordance to the *Park Act* and corresponding regulations
- The protected area will be managed in accordance to the direction provided in the OSLRMP

## Consultation and Future Planning

The Environmental Stewardship Division will continue to consult with local groups to determine promotion, information and volunteer strategies. Also, the Environmental Stewardship Division will work with the appropriate Okanagan First Nations to further determine heritage and cultural values and strategies to manage these interests. Future planning will not compromise the ecological integrity of natural or cultural values within the protected area, especially where there are species or communities that are considered at risk in the province. Integrated planning with other agencies, adjacent land managers and interest groups will assist in providing ecosystem integrity and promote long-term stewardship of the area.

## Zoning Plan

The entire protected area is zoned as *Special Feature* to protect the importance of the area for California bighorn sheep. The objective of this zone is to protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values. Recreational use levels will be kept at low levels with visitor facilities limited to those necessary for the interpretation and educational experience. Access may be restricted during certain times of the year to protect the California bighorn sheep.

# Appendix 1
# Acceptable Activities, Uses and Facilities in Vaseux Protected Area

| Activity/Use/Facility | Acceptability |
|---|---|
| Aboriginal traditional activities and uses | Y |
| Hunting | Y |
| Fishing | N |
| Trapping | N2 |
| Grazing (domestic livestock) | N2 |
| Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding | N |
| Utility corridors | N2 |
| Communication Sites | N |
| Horse Use/ Pack Animals | Y |
| Guide Outfitting (hunting) | Y |
| Guide Outfitting (fishing) | N |
| Guide Outfitting (nature tours) | Y |
| Guide Outfitting (river rafting) | N |
| Commercial Recreation (facility-based) | N |
| Commercial Recreation (non-facility based) | Y |
| Backcountry Huts | N |
| Water Control Structures | N2 |
| Road Access | Y |
| Off-road Access (snowmobiling) | N |
| Off-road Access (motorized) | N |
| Off-road Access (mechanical activities) | N |
| Camping | N |
| Campfires | N |
| Aircraft Access | N2 |
| Fire Management (suppression) | Y |
| Fire Management (prescribed fire management) | Y |
| Fire Management (prevention) | Y |
| Forest Insect/Disease Control | M |
| Noxious Weed Control | M |
| Exotic Insect/Disease Control | M |
| Scientific Research (specimen collection) | M |
| Scientific Research (manipulative activities) | M |

Y= allowed subject to conditions identified in the management direction statement or management plan

M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives

N= not allowed

N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only

N2= present and allowed to continue but not normally allowed

## Appendix II
## Conservation Data Centre list of red- and blue-listed species

| Category | Latin Name | Common Name | Red or Blue Listing |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vascular Plant | MYOSURUS APETALUS VAR BOREALIS | Mousetail | Red List |
| Vascular Plant | CAREX COMOSA | Bearded Sedge | Blue List |
| Birds | AERONAUTES SAXATALIS | White-throated Swift | Blue List |
| Birds | CATHERPES MEXICANUS | Canyon Wren | Blue List |
| Birds | MELANERPES | Lewis's Woodpecker | Blue List |
| Birds | OTOS FLAMMEOLUS | Flammulated Owl | Blue List |
| Communities | PSEUDOTSUGA MENZIESII – PINUS PONDEROSA / FESTUCA IDAHOENSIS | Douglas-fir – Ponderosa Pine / Idaho Fescue | Blue List |
| Mammals | EUDERMA MACULATUM | Spotted Bat | Blue List |
| Reptiles | *Four data protected records* | | |